

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM: 5 – G

DATE: March 31, 2016

SUBJECT: Quality Assurance Review Update

At the February 2015 meeting, AAC approved moving forward with a statewide Quality Assurance (QA) Review process of courses eligible for the dual-credit program. The exigency for this program emerged during the institutional visits to discuss the General Education review process in 2014; whereby, a number of faculty raised concerns about the quality of online courses delivered at partner institutions within the Regental system. Additionally, these questions emerged at a time when the system was engaging in a robust expansion of dual credit opportunities for students, with a rather significant portion enrolling in online courses across multiple institutions.

During the April 2015 AAC meeting it was noted that before this project could move forward, a number of initial steps needed to be addressed and an additional update on the work was discussed at the July 2015 meeting. Attached to the February 2015 agenda were a series of QA rubrics currently used by each of the institutions. While the institutions have largely adhered to the original rubric developed for the system, it became evident that there are quite a number of variances. Also, the system rubric has not been reviewed since 2008. For these reasons, a necessary first step was to standardize the system rubric. A subcommittee was requested to review changes incorporated by institutions into their rubrics, and come to consensus on a revised system QA rubric that will be used in the statewide QA review process. Eric Mosterd, Regents Fellow for e-Education Initiatives, has served as the system lead for the subcommittee which is comprised of two representatives from each institution. In pulling together the system committee to evaluate the rubric, AAC representatives were asked to identify: 1) An instructor: preferably one that regularly teaches online, and who has been through the institution’s QA review process a number of times; and 2) an instructional designer (ID): preferably one who facilitates the institution’s QA reviews; ideally, this would be the person in charge of the institution’s QA process, or the one most familiar with it. Based on the responses received from the campuses, the following individuals were identified:

Institution	Instructional Design Rep	Instructor Rep
BHSU	Devin Feighan Chris Dawes (instructional designer)	Ryan Clark (professor, Speech) Cheryl Anagnopoulos (professor, Psychology)
DSU	Mingming Shao (instructional designer)	Gabe Midland (professor, Education)

(Continued)

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Informational.

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NSU	Debra Wenzel (Director of Instructional Design) Rebecca Kitzman (instructional designer)	Gregory Francom (professor, e-Learning)
SDSMT	Kate Alley (Associate Provost)	Sally Palmer (professor, Humanities)
SDSU	Shouhong Zhang John Howard (instructional designer)	Jo Nesmith (instructor, Speech)
USD	Eric Mosterd (chair; Asst. Director, Center for Teaching & Learning)	Karen Card (professor, Education Administration)

As the committee has worked to develop the [Common Rubric](#) there has been concern about the implications associated with: 1) how the rubric violates faculty academic freedom to design and deliver the course content and materials as they deem appropriate; 2) the need to coordinate quality assurance reviews prior to the start of the academic term; and 3) the value in establishing a common rubric for the system. When the decision was made in 2011 to move away from a system review schedule, the guidance provided by the Chief Academic Affairs officer at the time was that the common rubric structure would be retained. Some institutions varied this approach and further noted that the adopted guidelines (see Attachment I) were no longer relevant. AAC representatives should be prepared to discuss the value of a common QA rubric for online courses considering the common course catalog employed in the Regental system. Additionally, whether the QA guidelines should be rewritten to match expectations for the campuses should also be discussed.

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM: 5.D

DATE: February 26, 2009

SUBJECT: Quality Assurance Policy and Processes

Dr. Anderson has provided the Quality Assurance Policy and Process for review. AAC should be prepared to offer suggestions.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Discussion and recommendation.

**South Dakota's EUC – Electronic University Consortium
Quality Assurance Policy and Process
For Online Courses Delivered by a South Dakota Public University
Revised – January, 2009**

Purpose: To improve and streamline the existing EUC quality assurance for distance education courses in keeping with the suggestions of The Higher Learning Commission (HLC).

Quality review processes are implemented to make certain that the proposed course or program is consistent with the institution's mission and goals. A quality assurance process provides a means for the proposed program or course to be reviewed according to the tenets of continuous quality improvement, meet the quality assurance standards of the institution, and the accreditation standards of the HLC.

The quality review process is intended to provide faculty with the guidance they need to ensure that students can focus on the content of the course and not be distracted by the technology or design of the course. The delivery of the content should be seamless and logical with direct routing to the information and communication tools that the student needs to access in order to be successful in the course.

A public demonstration of commitment to establishing quality standards, review of programs and courses, identification of quality assurance practices, and implementation of continuous quality improvement communicates to stakeholders the integrity and credibility of EUC.

Definition: Distance education means courses that do not have a face-to-face instructional component. (Instructor and students are not together in the same room.)

Objectives:

- To develop a statewide repository of high quality online courses.
- To manage curricular investment and development.
- To coordinate the delivery of statewide online delivered courses.
- To ensure high quality distance-delivered courses
- Identify the evidence of quality assurance reviews in programs and courses

Stakeholders:

- Students
- Faculty
- Administrators
- South Dakota University Partners
- Local community
- Higher Learning Commission

- Other accrediting agencies
- EUC members
- Other consortium partnerships
- Legislators
- Tax Payers
- South Dakota Board of Regents

The following identifies five processes of the quality assurance program for the Electronic University Consortium:

1. Quality assurance review of courses at the university level
 - a. Demonstration of evidence of the reviews
2. Quality assurance review of courses at the systems level
 - a. Demonstration of evidence of the reviews
3. Training of faculty and staff on quality assurance review to ensure system wide consistency
 - a. Demonstration of evidence of training
4. Quality assurance review of programs at the university level
 - a. Demonstration of evidence of the review
5. Quality assurance review of programs at the systems level
 - a. Demonstration of evidence of the review

In order facilitate compliance with accreditation standards, the process of course and program review is based upon the principles of the “Best Practices of Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs,” as established by the HLC.

Online Courses

Step 1: Course Authorship Agreement

The first step in creating an online course is for the faculty or course developer to complete the Course Authorship Agreement and route to the university’s Distance Education Dean or Designee. The agreement assures all parties understand the expectations associated with quality. The agreement also makes clear the intellectual property rights of the author, the University, and the South Dakota Board of Regents

Step 2: Recording the Details of Newly Authored Courses on the EUC Shared Database

The universities will maintain a database of proposed and on-going online course offerings. Proposed courses and courses that have been developed are to be maintained in a master list of online courses. Course information will be sent to the EUC coordinator or designee from the universities. EUC will maintain a master database of all courses under development or those being offered. This database will provide the universities with information of courses under development that may be needed in proposed programs. Review of this database for new programs will be part of the quality assurance process for program review.

Once a course has been approved at the university level and undergone a quality assurance course review at the university level, course information, including course rotation, will be sent to the EUC Coordinator or designee to update on the master list of approved online courses. Evidence that the course has undergone a quality assurance review prior to its being offered online and any subsequent university level reviews are maintained at the university level. Evidence of these course reviews may be requested if the course is selected for a system level review.

These databases of proposed and developed courses will be maintained on the EUC website so that those who are developing programs can review them for information on courses that may be applicable to their curriculum plan.

Matrix Legend -- S: SDSU, B: BHSU, N: NSU, D: DSU, U: USD: M: SDSMT
If the course has a (P) it is a proposed course.

Step 3: Online Course Development

Faculty authors shall consult early with University EUC representatives or their designees on course design criteria (Quality Matters standards or other future standards). Ideally, best design practices for online delivery should be incorporated at the time of authorship.

Step 4: Quality Assurance Review – Institutional Level

The SD Board of Regents, in tandem with the Universities, has adopted a uniform quality assurance rubric based on material provided by Quality Matters rubric developed in the FIPSE project. The Quality Matters project was sponsored in part by the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education (FIPSE), United States Department of Education. The Quality Matters (2005-2006) project developed a replicable pathway for quality assurance and course improvement in online learning.

The Universities are responsible for developing their own course review tracking system, incorporating the uniform quality assurance standards, and scoring rubric.

Evidence of these quality assurance reviews, at the institutional level, shall be maintained and made available to system reviewers when the course is selected for a system level review. It is the institution's responsibility to ensure that suggested improvements, from these institutional reviews have been made to the course.

Step 5: Future Reviews - Institutional

All online courses are assigned a future three-year review date based on the date of initial or repeat review. Example: online course first reviewed in the fall 2008 semester for spring 2009 delivery – next scheduled review date would be during the fall 2011 semester. The review dates are independent of delivery – they are based on time elapsed. The tracking and coordination of these reviews is the responsibility of the providing institution, however such information may be requested by the EUC at the time of the systems review.

A significant revision to a course prompts a new review. What constitutes a significant revision is determined at the institutional level and may vary from institution to institution.

Step 6: Quality Assurance Review: System Level

Selection of teams: the EUC committee representatives for each university will select system reviewers from their university. The teams will work in coordination with one team reviewer being off campus and one team reviewer from the delivering campus to coordinate and communicate regarding the reviewed courses.

Option One System Review Team: the EUC Coordinator will assign external reviewers, from each university, to review another university's courses. Faculty who are having their courses reviewed are encouraged to participate in the review process with the system review team. It is strongly suggested that they conduct their own self-review of their course using the quality matters rubric.

The following individuals are part of the review team:

- 1) An internal reviewer
- 2) An external reviewer (assigned by the EUC Coordinator)
- 3) The faculty's self-reviews are given to the EUC representative to send on to the EUC Coordinator
- 4) The EUC Coordinator

Option One: The reviews of the courses will occur in the semester that the course is offered, for example, the courses for fall will be reviewed in the fall. The completed rubrics will be due to the EUC coordinator within one month after the semester's end.

Option One: The report on the system's review for the preceding fall, spring and summer course review will be due to the board office no later than (for example) November 1st (08-09) 2009.

The raw data, i.e.) individual course reviews, are not shared with the review teams. However, any course, which does not attain the required standards of quality, will be referred to the VP of the college offering the course through a conference with the EUC coordinator and CAO of the BOR.

Option Two: The review schedule would begin on Jan 1 and go until December 31st. This would allow the institutions to schedule their own reviews at times least disruptive to their schedules and the review teams to schedule their reviews during that span of time according to what works best in their schedules. In this way, the reviews can continue on a year-round basis, to include the summer courses.

When a course is due for a review (chosen by the EUC) the offering university initiates the review by creating a three person team made up of the instructor of the course under review, the internal reviewer (a reviewer from that university) and an outside reviewer (a reviewer from another university chosen by the offering universities review team). The coordinator of the team would be the internal reviewer. The internal reviewer would be responsible for initiating any coordination meetings (by phone or in person) with all three team members. Each team member reviews the course according to the QA document being used at that time. All comments and scores are discussed at a final coordination meeting and incorporated on to one course review document. Any disagreement on scores or comments is noted. This ONE document is then sent on to the EUC Coordinator. This process could start in January with the institutions being notified of courses to be review by the EUC Coordinator, with the completed reviews due to the

EUC coordinator by the end of the year. Doing the review in this manor provides 1) instructor participation, giving them part ownership in the process, 2) flexibility in coordination 3) institutional responsibility for their own courses, and 4) a way of including all courses, even through the summer, into the process.

Selection of Courses:

Courses are randomly selected by RIS. Online courses will be selected for fall and spring semester based upon enrollment of 10 students or more, non-duplicated course sections, and rotation of reviews. Three percent of online courses, per semester, will be selected from each university per semester for review. All courses reviewed will be tracked; courses will only be reviewed once every three years.

If a course is found to need improvement, the faculty member will be provided an opportunity to make the suggested changes and the course will be reviewed again. The satisfactory results are what will be reported in the final EUC report. If the suggested course changes are not made the information will be shared with the appropriate VPAA. Faculty will benefit from a review by his/her peers of their courses. Finally, faculty will gain different experiences and perspectives by having reviewers outside of their home institution review the course.

The final system review EUC report will include; a list of courses reviewed - Course name, number, instructor, institution; the names of the reviewers and institutions; and a general summary. The report will be generalized, the intent is to be informational versus punitive. This statewide process is a peer review process intended to satisfy the requirements of the HLC, the SD Board of Regents, and each university. The report will be presented annually, to AAC in March.